

What you really need to know (Jeremiah 9:23-24 & 1 Cor 1:18-2:5)

09-Feb-2020

G'Day church family

We'll be looking at **Jeremiah 9:23-24** and **1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5**.

So, it would be **great to have your Bibles in front of you** - and you can use the **outline** if you want to take **notes**.

Let me pray first...

### Intro/Boasting (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Last week, we started to look at Paul's letter to the church of God in Corinth and the problem that Paul identified was that the **Unity of the church was under threat** - and He says how good it is when there is unity in the church.

#### [PowerPoint 1-Unity]

The whole **letter** then goes on to **look at what things might affect the church's unity**

So here in our passage today

Paul tackles **Boasting**

So, we'd better define boasting

#### [PowerPoint 2-Boasting Definition]

*A **doctor**, an **engineer**, and a **politician** were **boasting** about which **profession** was the **oldest** and the **best**.*

*The doctor boasted "**without a doctor humankind would not have survived**, so I am sure that my profession is the oldest and the best "*

*"No," said the **engineer**, "when life began there was complete chaos,*

and it took an **engineer** to create some **semblance of order** from this chaos. So **engineering** is the **oldest** and **best** profession."

"**But,**" said the **politician**, "**without politicians** there **wouldn't be chaos** – who do you think created the chaos?"

- **Boasting** was a **problem** in **Corinth** and it's a **problem** today
- **Aussie's** in particular - **don't like** people **boasting**
- **Boasting** is the **quickest** way to get **cut down** to size in our society

In our OT reading from Jeremiah 9:23-24

[PowerPoint 3-Jer 9:23-24]

- People were **boasting** about **3** things:
  - **Wisdom**
  - **Strength**
  - **Riches/Wealth**
- But Jeremiah says God wants them to boast about **something** way **more important** than their own wisdom, strength and wealth - He says they should boast:
  - That they have the understanding to **KNOW** what **God** is like
  - And that the **Lord** **exercises** **kindness**, **justice** and **righteousness**

[We come back to this later]

But for now - the Apostle Paul picks up on this **theme of boasting** and tells the **people** of **Corinth** and **us** - **what they really need to know**

In fact, 3 things they really need to know and we need to know...

## [PowerPoint 4-God Wiser]

First - God is wiser and stronger than humans (vv18-25)

### 1. God is wiser and stronger than humans (1 Cor 1:18-25)

- Paul begins in v18
- To **people who don't believe** in Jesus - those "who are **perishing**" - the **cross seems foolish**
- The **Greek** word used for **foolish** here - is where we get **moron** from
- So, to unbelievers - Paul's saying - **Jesus** dying on a **cross** is **moronic**
- But to believers - it's **God's power**
- In what way is it God's power?
  - **God's power sent His Word** - made **flesh** - **God's power** sent His **Son** to live with **humans**
  - **God's power** led Him to **leave His heavenly dwelling** and **dwell** with **humans**
  - **God's power** allowed His **Son** - fully **God** and fully **human** - and **perfect** in every way - to be the **perfect sacrifice** for **sin** - and allowed His son to **pay for people's sin** - and **take their punishment**
  - That's **seems crazy** - **unless** you have **faith**
  - And **God's power** didn't stop there - God **accepted** that **sacrifice** as the **payment** for sin
  - And **God's power** raised His **Son** to **life** - showing only **God** - through His Son - has the **power over SIN** and **DEATH**
- In V19 - Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14 - God says - **I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate**

- What does he mean here? Here's some **examples** of how **God destroys** the **wisdom** of the wise and **frustrates** the **intelligent** in this world
  - **Christians** are told by the "wise world" we live in - that an **unborn child** is only a lump of tissue that can be **discarded** at will - but **Christians know** through the **Spirit of truth** that this is **not true** and killing unborn children is wrong.
  - **Christians** are told by the "wise world" that the "smart people" have **decided** that **evolution** is true and that **there is no God** who created everything - but a **Christian** has **God's Spirit** living inside of them **telling** them that **rumours of God's demise** have been greatly **exaggerated**.
  - **Christians** are told by the "wise world" that **life** is all about being **rich and successful** - but a **Christian** knows through **God's Word** - what matters is being rich towards **God** (Luke 12:13-21)
- Paul's argues in v20-21
- **Where** can you find someone truly wise, truly educated and truly intelligent in this day and age?
- Hasn't **God** exposed all the so-called **wise** - as **foolish wisdom** of the world
- **Even with all their wisdom** - the worldly wise - **didn't have a clue** when it came to **knowing God**
- So, the end of v21 - **God** chose what **seemed** like a **foolish method** of saving people - **preaching** that people can be **saved** by a **dead hero** dying on a **cross** - just **seems** outrageously **dumb**?

- So, in vv22-24 - Paul compares three groups

[PowerPoint 4b-Table]

Group	What they think of the cross	What they need to belief
Jews	Stumbling block - offensive	Miraculous signs
Greeks	Foolishness	Wisdom
The "Called" (Christians)	Power & wisdom of God	Faith in Jesus

- To the **Jews** [1<sup>st</sup> Group] the **cross** was a **stumbling block** or **offensive**. It **literally** means it is a **scandal**. Why?
  - It seemed a **scandal** to the **Jews** that the **one** who **ended His life** on a **cross** - could **possibly** be **God's chosen one**, the **Messiah**? They pointed to their own **law** "... anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse..." (Deut 21:23)
  - To the **Jews** rather than **Jesus death** on the **cross** proving He was the **Messiah** - to them it finally **disproved** it
  - To the **Jews** - **Jesus didn't fit the profile of a Messiah** - they wanted a **King** to **save** them from the **Romans** - not a **King** to **save** them from themselves and from their **sin**
  - It might seem **extraordinary** to **us** that the **words of Isaiah 53** and the idea of a **suffering servant** - **pointing** to **Jesus** - could be **ignored** by the **Jews** - but not many saw these words as relating to

the Messiah - and so the **cross of Jesus** was an **insurmountable hurdle to the Jews**

- The **Jews** also looked for **miraculous signs** - in **Paul's time**, there were **many false Messiahs**
  - In **45AD** a guy name **Theudas** - had **persuaded thousands** of people to **follow him out to the River Jordan** - and **promised** at his word the river would **divide** and he would take them **across on dry land**
  - In **54AD** - a man from **Egypt** claiming to be a **prophet** - **persuaded 30,000 people** to follow him to the Mount of Olives and promised by his word the walls of Jerusalem would fall down [Josephus Jewish War - 2.259 263 - Acts 21:38]
  - These were **the kind of signs** the **Jews** were looking for
  - Remember even in **Jesus' days** - they **asked** for a **sign** (Mat 12:38) and Jesus said in Matt 12:39-40 - **A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**
- To the **Greeks** [2<sup>nd</sup> group] the **message** of the **cross** was **foolish**
  - To the **Greeks** - the first **character** of a **god** was a **total inability to feel anything**. If **God** could **feel joy** or **sorrow** or **anger** or **grief** - it meant some **human had influenced God** - and so the **human** was then **greater than God**. So - they **argued** that **God** had to be **incapable of feeling**. A **God who suffered** was a **contradiction** in terms.

- The **Greeks went further** - a **God** who involved Himself in human affairs was an **insult** to that **God**. **God** was by necessity utterly detached from humans. So, the idea of **God becoming incarnate** and becoming the man **Jesus** - was **revolting** to the **Greek mind**
- The **Greeks** also sought wisdom - they were intoxicated with fine words and logic and rhetoric - so a **Christian preacher** [like Paul] with his blunt message about sin and the need for sacrifice on the cross - came across as a crude, ridiculous and a laughable message
- So, it looked as if the **Christian message** had little chance of success against a background of **Jewish** and **Greek life** and thinking
- But the **3<sup>rd</sup> group** - the called ones - **Christians** - they had **faith** - which means believing without seeing and without necessarily being able to prove it
- **Those with faith** saw wisdom and power in what **God** did in sending Jesus to die on a **cross**
- In fact, as our OT reading from Jeremiah said - this **3<sup>rd</sup> group** saw
- **God's action** - as showing kindness (**grace**) in sending someone to take our punishment and our place
- And they saw **God's action** - as showing justice - in that sin is dealt with once and for all - the penalty for sin paid for
- And they saw **God's action** - as showing righteousness - He always does the right thing - and because of **Jesus** - we can have that righteousness too - and be right with **God**

- So, Paul says in V25 - if God was foolish (which he's not) - he would still be smarter than any human - and if God was weak (which he's not) - he would still be stronger than any human.
- What Paul really wants us to know is that:
- God is omniscient [all-knowing] and omnipotent [all powerful]
- God is wiser and stronger than humans - that's the first point
- Challenge - do we think we're smarter than God?  
Do we sometimes tell God, He's got it wrong? Do we foolishly give God advice?

(pause)

## 2. Boast in the Lord only (1 Cor 1:26-31)

2<sup>nd</sup> point - what Paul says we really need to know is - there's nothing for us to boast about - we should **boast in the Lord only** - that's in vv26-31

### [PowerPoint 5a-Points 1/2]

- In v26 - Paul is pleased to note that for the most part - the **church of Corinth** was comprised of **ordinary humble folk** - they didn't have **super wise** people, or **influential** or **high-society** families.
- V27 & v28 - he says - isn't it true - that **God deliberately chooses men and women** that the **current culture overlooks** or **exploits** or **abuses**. Isn't it obvious that **God chooses** the so-called "**nobodies**" in society to **expose** the **pretentiousness** of the so called "**somebodies**"?
  - Take the OT for example:
    - God chose a hated **Jewish boy - Joseph** - to be **PM of Egypt**

- God spoke to **Moses** through a **burning bush** that **never burns up** - that's **crazy** - and **God chose stuttering, insecure Moses** (a **murderer** to boot) to **lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt** - that's crazy
- **God chose the young shepherd boy David** - to **fight the Giant Goliath** - that's **insane - madness - suicide**, right?
- God chose the **orphan Jewish girl Esther** to be **Queen of Persia** and **save her people** from destruction - that's crazy too
- **Four of the women mentioned in Jesus genealogy in NT**
  - That's **Tamar** - a **defiled** woman
  - **Rahab** - a **prostitute**
  - **Ruth** - who wasn't even Jewish - she was **from Moab**
  - And **Uriah's wife - Bathsheba** - who was an **adulteress**
- That's **crazy** isn't it?
- And what about the people who followed Jesus?
  - **Uneducated fishermen**
  - **A tax collector** - **hated** by society
  - **Women** - **2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens**
  - **Lepers** - who were **outcasts**
  - **Disabled** - who were **outcasts**
- The **scribes and teachers of the Law** in Jesus' time, who read the Old Testament scrolls, **should have** been the ones to **recognize Jesus**. But **instead** it was simple **fishermen** (not many noble, not many wise) that **recognized** who He was.

- Paul's point is that the approach to God is not found through intellectual reasoning and man's wisdom, but **God is revealed in such simplicity that the wise of the world stumble.**
- God **chose** these so called "**nobodies**" because
  - They **realized** they were **lost**, they **needed help** and **hope** and because they were **humble** and **teachable** - unlike the rich, the pharisees and the experts in the law - they had it all - or so they thought
  - God chose "**nobodies**" to **shame** the smart and wise "**somebodies**"
  - God chose "**nobodies**" so they would **boast** in what the Lord had **done** - rather than **boasting in themselves** (v29)
- What **about us** - **are we** **boastful** and **proud**?
- What's **wrong** with **boasting** anyway?
  - **Boasting** means we're **giving** the **credit** and **glory** to **ourselves** for what we have or have achieved - **rather than** giving the **glory** to **God**?
  - Boasting means we're **focusing on ourselves** - and **not looking upward** (to God) or **looking outward** (to others)
  - **Boasting** is the **opposite** of being **humble** and **teachable**
- **Challenge** - perhaps at **morning tea** - **ask a friend** (if you're game) - **whether your boastful?**

(pause)

V30 - **Everything** we have - **right thinking** and **right living**, a **clean slate** and a **fresh start** - all comes from **God** by way of **Jesus Christ**.

As Paul says in v31

Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord

(pause)

### 3. Know Jesus and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:1-5)

**3<sup>rd</sup> point** that Paul says we really need to know - is to **know Jesus and Him Crucified** - that's in chapter 2 - verses 1 to 5

[PowerPoint 5b-3<sup>rd</sup> point]

Paul remembers back to **when he first came to Corinth**

V1 - He **didn't come** with all sorts of **fancy speaking** - or **human wisdom**

He simply **proclaimed** the testimony of **God**

He let **Jesus' testimony** - of who Jesus is - where He came from - why He came - Jesus' perfect living - Jesus' sacrificial death - He let **Jesus' testimony speak for itself**

In fact - as far as Paul's concerned

V2 - **All we need to know is Jesus and Him crucified**

The **cross of Jesus speaks for itself**

Any **testimony** from a follower of Jesus is **powerful** - and it **shows us the power of God** at work in that person

V3 - Even though **Paul came in weakness** and great **fear and trembling**

Remember - he has **suffered** a lot - and he's **fearful of opposition** - which he always got - and **concerned** how his **message will be received** - especially from a philosophically thinking city like Corinth

But v4 - he realizes that the **effectiveness of his message is not down** to how **wise and persuasive his message of Jesus is** -

No - he has **something much more powerful to rely on** - end of v4

That is the **Spirit's Power** -

What Paul realizes and we should too

That when the message of Jesus is told

The **Holy Spirit empowers** the speaker

And the Holy Spirit **enlightens** the listener

So, as we hear or read God's Word - the **Spirit - works** in our hearts - and **affects** us

As people are **affected by God's Word** - the **Spirit transforms** lives

That's way **more powerful** than any **wisdom** of our own

And so, Paul is able to conclude in v5

That **our life of faith** is a **response** to **God's Power** - through **Jesus' testimony** and the **work** of the **HS** - and not from some **fancy human speaking**

### Conclusion

To finish up then

Just **one final thought**

If we wanted to **send someone** out from **Toukley** to be a **missionary** to some **remote place** where people hadn't heard about Jesus - to tell them the **Good News** of Jesus -

**What qualifications** would we **expect** them to have?

[Open up for answers]

**God** basically **sent** a **terrorist** - someone who had been responsible for **Christians** being **persecuted** - even **killed**

God sent **Saul** - who became the Christian, **Paul** -

Would we have thought of doing that?

**Human wisdom says no** - of course not!

But **God** - **destroyed** the **wisdom** of the **wise** - and **frustrated** the intelligence of the intelligent - and **sent Paul** to Corinth and other places - and what **amazing results** - **churches planted** - and  $\frac{1}{2}$  **the NT written** by Paul

That's crazy isn't it?

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD (Isaiah 55:8)

Let's pray